A Very American "Strike"

A recent history of Minnesota's 1.23.2026 Day of Truth and Freedom

By Jennings Mergenthal

Historians are often hesitant to historicize recent (and ongoing) events. It's much safer to wait until the benefit of hindsight not least of all because it ensures that that people are less likely to be able to disagree with your analysis. But this does create gaps in the record.

My attempt with this zine is not to make a definitive accounting of events, in fact, I do not want it to be. You may well disagree with my narrative and conclusions and if so, I welcome you to make your refutations and perform your own analysis and to leave a record of it. This is what allows people in the future, people who weren't here for this to look back and understand the contemporary discourse. I'm not saying you can't get mad about what I have to say, but I'm challenging you to do something productive and constructive if you do.

Graffiti on Lake and Cedar in Minneapolis, January 22, 2026.

The context

Obviously, this event exists in the historical context of police violence in the Twin Cities, the intense geographic segregation that shaped neighborhood demographics, the history of labor rights in America and in the Twin Cities specifically, American imperialism abroad that destabilized other countries, American imperialism against Indigenous nations that led to the establishment of Minnesota as a settler colonial state and a million other things. Because this is a historicization of the moment we are both living in, by necessity I am going to have to assume that you, the reader, will have enough of a working knowledge of these things, or be able to learn about those if you don't.

Specifically, let's look at the context of what led up to the Day of Truth and Freedom on January 23rd, 2026.

In early December of 2025, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement began what they termed Operation Metro Surge in the Twin Cities, part of a broader national crackdown on immigration.[2] Throughout December they steadily increased presence and kidnappings and the level of violence. By early January 2026 this increased to more than 3,000 agents.[3]

1/7 One of these ICE agents, Johnathan Ross, shot and killed Renee Good, a legal observer. This is not the only inflection point, nor was it the first ICE killing, but it served as a major inflection point nevertheless.

1/8, Faith leaders with the interfaith group Isaiah held a press conference calling for the immediate removal of ice from Minnesota.

[1] Obviously, this event didn't spring into being suddenly and fully, and involved pre-planning and coordination so this is a non-exhaustive timeline of when information became publicly available.

[2] Estimated to cost the taxpayer $18 million a week in direct expenses, from Jake Schwitzer, "The Cost of Operation Metro Surge." Northstar Policy Action January 22, 2026. This is going to be an in-line citation zine, not an end notes one.

[3] Aside from this page, everything happens in January, so to save space I am going to stylize all the dates as 1/XX.

1/14, Isaiah, Faith in Minnesota and the 50501 movement made a call for A Day of Truth and Freedom to be held on 1/23, 2026. The original video featured pastor of Zion Baptist church, Brian Herron, and featured first public call for an action, abstaining from work, school and shopping and asking people to spend the day fasting and praying, to protest the ICE occupation.[4]

A website for the movement, Iceoutnowmn.com was registered this same day.[5]

St. Paul Federation of Educators endorsed the event, as did other unions who had been approached before the event went public.

By 1/16, additional unions had publicly joined this call and public discourse began to shift, referring to the event as a general strike.

The organizers outlined four goals:

1. ICE must leave Minnesota now.
2. The officer who killed Renee Good must be held legally accountable.
3. No additional federal funding for ICE in the upcoming Congressional budget and ICE should be investigated for human and Constitutional violations of Americans and our neighbors.
4. We call upon Minnesota and National Companies to become 4th Amendment businesses, cease economic relations with ICE and refuse ICE entry or using their property for staging grounds.

And three tactics, which we will evaluate (not in this order) over the next several pages:

- No work (except emergency services)
- No school
- No shopping (or consumer spending)

[4] At least the original that I could find. This is where the turn away from chronological social media timelines really hindered my research effort.

[5] But the site is only archived starting on 1/18, so we are not able to see the original website)

No School

Minneapolis Public Schools cancelled school on 1/8 and 9 following border patrol agents kidnapping and gassing people at Roosevelt High School on 1/7. The also opened the option for virtual attendance for any student through 2/12, and St. Paul schools also opened a virtual option.

Both the St. Paul and Minneapolis teachers' unions endorsed the 1/23 event, but like all other unions, stopped short of calling for a strike.[6] On 1/15, Minneapolis Public Schools announced that there would be no school for students on 1/23 for a teacher record keeping day.

The Pioneer Press reported on 1/21, that 6,000 students across St. Paul opted for virtual learning, including 55% of students who spoke Spanish at home. They also noted a student walk out the previous week, on the 1/14 where students rallied at the capitol in protest of ICE during the school day. District officials reported no plans to close schools, stating "Jan. 23 is a regularly scheduled school day for Saint Paul Public Schools. In this moment, the most powerful thing we can do for all of our students is provide the stability, safety, and continuity of their school community."

At 9:46 on the 1/22, the National Weather Service issued an extreme cold warning for that evening until noon on 1/23 noting "dangerously cold wind chills as low as 45 below expected." Shortly thereafter, Saint Paul Public Schools reversed course and cancelled school on the 23rd. Many suburban schools also followed suit.

The "no school" aim was now effectively met as schools opted to cancel rather than switch to a virtual option. By closing the districts avoided a potential confrontation or walkout. Theirs was the most explicit acknowledgement of the weather to sidestep any acknowledgement of the 1/23 event, but it is far from the only time this will become relevant.

[6] More about this in the No Work section.

[7] Imani Kruzen, "St. Paul schools: 6,000 students to do online learning due to immigration actions." Pioneer Press. January 21, 2026.

No Shopping

This was coupled with the demand for businesses to become 4th Amendment Businesses. “4th amendment workplace” is a relatively new term referring to a workplace that has been trained in a particular toolkit to refuse entry to ICE without a judicial warrant, ensure staff are trained in asserting constitutional rights and commits to protecting workers regardless of immigration status. Their website 4thworkplace.org was registered in March 2025 and is a project of the Defend and Recruit Network (founded January 2025) which is itself a project of Siembra NC, a Latine community activist organization founded in 2017. Most of the existing businesses that publicly identify as 4th amendment workplaces seem from my research to be based in North Carolina.

This No Shopping request was also relatively straightforward, a boycott is one of the few forms of mass protest still largely legal in the United States. What made 1/23 interesting is how this interplayed with the No Work strategy.

Many businesses across the state (formally counted at around 700 by the organizers) opted to close to participate. Most of the businesses that closed were in the metro area and were predominantly cafés, restaurants and independent stores. This was usually announced in the store or online at least a few days in advance, often by displaying one of the event signs. Many of these businesses had also broadly been suffering from reduced traffic due to the general mood of the Cities during the ICE occupation, and from the targeting of their workers.

A few of the businesses that remained open did so with caveats, offering free food and warming space, and/or donating some percent of the day’s proceeds, varying by business from 10% to 100%.

A number of co-ops also closed, of particular note was the Mississippi Market Co-op, whose employees at all three locations are unionized with the United Food and Workers Union Local 1189. The store posted that employees scheduled to work would be paid during the closure.

The voluntary closures did build a sense of solidarity, and overcame one of the particular challenges of organizing business owners. If you close your business in protest, not only are you financially hurt, but any of your potential customers are lost to your competition as your customers patronize other businesses.[8]

It is notable however, that many of the large employers in Minnesota did not participate. Indeed many, like Target, had been actively protested for the collaboration with ICE. This reveals part of the issue with planning an end date for boycott actions: they can be ignored relatively easily with little consequence for large businesses.

Additionally, it is cynical to bring up, but I feel it is likely that temperature played a role in this decision, for at least some businesses. The closure of a business during a slow season, when a large number of people are already planning to abstain from commerce is less of a material sacrifice than it would be closing in say, June. This is not to say it is not a sacrifice at all, nor claim that all the voluntary closures were all purely pragmatic not based on personal or professional convictions, but I feel it is a factor worth considering as a part of the holistic picture.

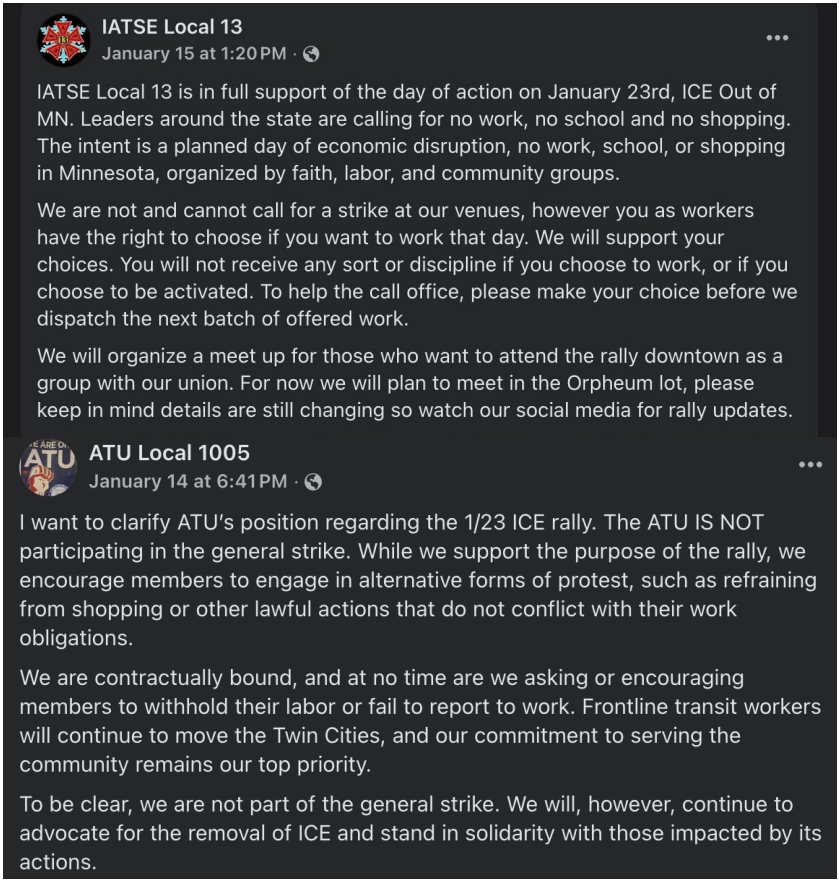
Signage at Seward Coop on Franklin Avenue, 1/22/26.

[8] You can read more about this in my zine about the Farm Holiday Association.

No Work (except for emergency services)[9]

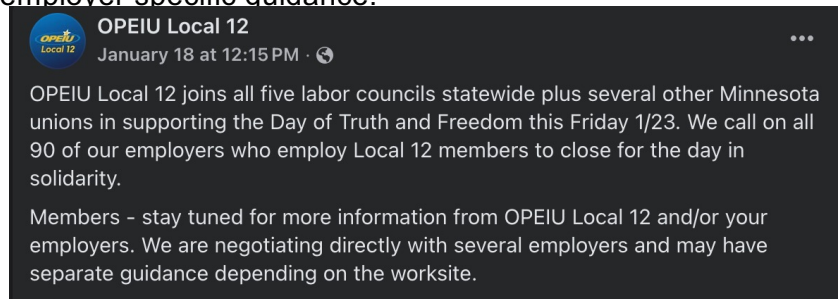
The “No Work” tactic reveals one of the central dissonances behind the event. Core to the popularization of the event was the support of labor unions, the regional labor councils and the Minnesota AFL-CIO. This naturally runs into the issue that since 1947, solidarity strikes have been illegal in the United States, striking is really only legal when a contract has expired and the union cannot endorse the strikes of individual members without violating the contract. This either prevents strikes from happening where unions are conservative or makes them definitionally illegal (though illegal strikes do still happen)

The event listed the support of a number of labor unions, and so I looked into their individual public messaging around the event.


IATSE Local 13
January 15 at 1:20 PM ·
IATSE Local 13 is in full support of the day of action on January 23rd, ICE Out of MN. Leaders around the state are calling for no work, no school and no shopping. The intent is a planned day of economic disruption, no work, school, or shopping in Minnesota, organized by faith, labor, and community groups.
We are not and cannot call for a strike at our venues, however you as workers have the right to choose if you want to work that day. We will support your choices. You will not receive any sort or discipline if you choose to work, or if you choose to be activated. To help the call office, please make your choice before we dispatch the next batch of offered work.
We will organize a meet up for those who want to attend the rally downtown as a group with our union. For now we will plan to meet in the Orpheum lot, please keep in mind details are still changing so watch our social media for rally updates.
ATU Local 1005
January 14 at 6:41 PM ·
I want to clarify ATU’s position regarding the 1/23 ICE rally. The ATU IS NOT participating in the general strike. While we support the purpose of the rally, we encourage members to engage in alternative forms of protest, such as refraining from shopping or other lawful actions that do not conflict with their work obligations.
We are contractually bound, and at no time are we asking or encouraging members to withhold their labor or fail to report to work. Frontline transit workers will continue to move the Twin Cities, and our commitment to serving the community remains our top priority.
To be clear, we are not part of the general strike. We will, however, continue to advocate for the removal of ICE and stand in solidarity with those impacted by its actions.

[9] In other general strikes, the striking workers have coordinated or made explicit arrangements to continue the work of emergency services, for more on that you can read my zine about the Seattle 1919 General Strike

One of the more active stances I was able to find was from OPEIU Local 12, which urged its employers to close and noted there would be employer specific guidance.


OPEIU Local 12
January 18 at 12:15 PM ·
OPEIU Local 12 joins all five labor councils statewide plus several other Minnesota unions in supporting the Day of Truth and Freedom this Friday 1/23. We call on all 90 of our employers who employ Local 12 members to close for the day in solidarity.
Members - stay tuned for more information from OPEIU Local 12 and/or your employers. We are negotiating directly with several employers and may have separate guidance depending on the worksite.

More explicit calls for strike participation were also made by MUWU-UAW Local 5105, the Macalester Undergraduate Worker's Union, whose members are not covered by a first contract, and GLU-UE Local 1105, the University of Minnesota Graduate Labor Union whose contract allows them substantial time flexing within their work schedule.[10]

The event website provided guidance for approaching employers about participating in the one-day strike including a letter to offer to management and a letter to indicate a return to work. These letters loosely cited the labor law and the right to strike, but lacked substantial context or explanation about how that right has been abridged. This is why the unions' statements largely endorsed the event by encouraging members to participate in the no shopping aspect, or the rally itself, but did not (and legally cannot) urge members to withhold labor.

Many unions, including the largest unions in the state, made no public acknowledgement of the event. Of course, most workers in Minnesota are not represented by unions, and so are free to individually withhold their labor, but as labor support was so key to the rhetoric around the event, I feel it is important to consider what that labor support actually looked like: encouragement, coordination and statements of solidarity, but not declaration of a strike. The publicly lauded statements issued by Minnesota's regional labor federations and the Minnesota AFL-CIO officially endorsed the event by joining the demands but not, crucially, the tactics.

Where is the power of the labor movement where labor is only withheld when workplaces are voluntarily closed?

[10] It's also because they're cool.

Case Study: Museums

Let's take a closer look at a specific case study that encapsulates all three of these tactics: the closure of the museums of the Twin Cities. Many of the large museums in the Twin Cities are unionized. The Walker Art Center, Minnesota Historical Society and Science Museum of Minnesota with AFSCME and the MIA with OPEIU.[11]

Most of the non-unionized museums in the Twin Cities publicly announced their closures further in advance.[12]

On the 22nd, the unionized museum began to announce their closures:

The Science Museum at 3:30 pm.

The MIA at 5:30 pm.

At 6:30pm, the Walker Worker Union, Local 4439 announced that they were participating by refusing to work by putting in time off requests. The Walker publicly had announced its closure by at least 6pm that same day.[13]

At 10:30 pm, MNHS announced the closure of its six staffed sites that are usually open on Fridays in the winter. They also offer guided tours of the capitol, and I was unable to find if these stopped.

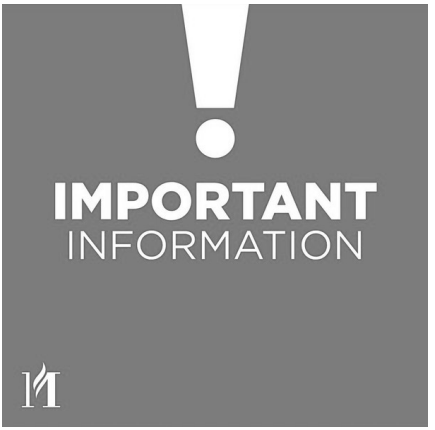
[11] A few Science Museum workers are represented by IUOE. About 52% of MIA workers are represented by OPEIU and about 18% are represented by SEIU, I do not have up to date figures on other representation at MNHS or the Walker, but they are majority AFSCME.

[12] The Bakken at 6pm on 1/20, the American Swedish Institute at 12:30 am, the Weisman Art Museum and the Museum of Russian Art at 5:pm, Minnesota Children's Museum at 9pm on 1/21. The M announced its closure publicly at 2pm on 1/23. The Bell Museum did not announce closure. In this section, all times are based on the timestamp of the museum's public Instagram post, because this is

[13] where there is a public record.
Though they didn't make an Instagram post so I don't have an exact time stamp,

[14] but they made a response to comment on the MIA's post referencing it by 6pm.
I was employed by the Science Museum for just shy of four years, was involved in the effort to organize the museum's local, and served as the chair of the negotiations committee for two years during our first contract bargaining.

In solidarity with our immigrant community, the museum will be closed on Friday, January 23, to allow space for action, reflection, rest, and safety.
Science is for everyone.



The Minneapolis Institute of Art will be closed on Friday, January 23.
We are pausing operations to recognize the weight of this moment in our community. We appreciate your understanding as we prioritize a culture of mutual respect and care for our employees and people in the Twin Cities community.
Regular museum hours will resume on Saturday. We look forward to welcoming you back.

Top Left: the Science Museum post.
Bottom Left: MNHS post, the caption included a list of sites but no further information.
Above: the MIA post.

With no connections to the levers of power at any of these four institutions, I cannot speak decisively to the intention of timelines behind their closure. But it is worth noticing that these closure announcements followed both the National Weather Service advisory and also the closure of nearly all the area schools. At least in my experience at the Science Museum, attendance took a significant hit on extremely cold days, and weekday visitorship was significantly driven by field trips, field trips which do not happen if schools are closed.[14]

I would describe all four of these institutions as run by people who like to think of themselves as social liberals but who have substantially conservative politics when it comes to labor in general and the labor of their employees specifically. They like collective rhetoric, but not collective action. Therefore I feel that these decisions to close should be considered fundamentally reactive, following a series of external actions that aligned in such a way that likely nobody was going to come to the museums anyway. Their choice to announce closure builds progressive social capitol at the cost of very little actual economic sacrifice.

Evaluation and Analysis

The rally itself happened as planned. Demonstrators met at 2pm at the Commons Park in Downtown Minneapolis and marched the mile to the Target Center. It was, as the National Weather Service warned, cold. Conservative commentators dismissively said "thousands" of people attended, some attendees described "a hundred thousand." By a few days later, many settled around "more than 50,000" and the event page itself reports "75,000+ attendees"

Upon arrival at the Target Center, some attendees remained for the rally, which features speeches by local community leaders, union presidents of the April Verrett (SEIU), Randi Weingarten (AFT), and Claude Cummings Jr. (CWA) as well as local community members impacted by ICE.[14] I think that the event showcased some of the organizational successes of the action: the decentralized nature and the amount of organizational pre-work that went into planning the event before it went public.

Usually this is the part of the zine where I explore how the movement ended, how it has been remembered and what lessons we can draw as throughlines to the present. However, as I write this, it is too soon to make any sort of retrospective statements, and so I am not going to make any claims one way or another about its accomplishments of its aims or its long-term staying power.[15]

But even as the pace of events relentlessly moves on, I think it is important to document and contextualize the events of the past few weeks, so that they can be learned from for future actions. I think it's important to consider the successes and shortcomings of the event and how it is currently being remembered.

In particular, I think this is important because I do not believe that the events 1/23 can be called a general strike, given the meaning and history of that term.

[14] If you want to see the speeches yourself, a video is available on the AFT YouTube.

[15] As I draft this on 1/24, Alex Pretti has been killed by a yet publicly unnamed border patrol agent and the national guard has been deployed.

This doesn't devalue it as an act of protest turnout, nor do I mean to intended to invalidate any meaning that you, the reader, may have found in participating. I also participated. I am aware that this is pedantic, but I believe that words have meaning and that specificity is important. And also if now is not a good time to have a critical conversation, when is? This will not stop during our lifetimes, rather it will intensify. If we are not able to reflect and have good faith discussions as we go, we will be functionally unable to grow.

CWA Local 7250 President Kieran Knutson was interviewed by Labor Notes' Luis Feliz Leon for a story published on 1/16, and said the following:

"We have not voted on a strike, but our union is calling on people to support this call. People can say, 'This is not a real general strike.' This is a mass mobilization. To me, at a certain point, a mass mobilization becomes something qualitatively new."[16]

And I agree. It can become something qualitatively new. And perhaps it did, I think this is as close to a general strike as we have been likely to see in the United States, given labor laws. But still, I believe that it's not a strike unless you are on strike. Quite pointedly, none of the unions involved were on strike, and taking a day off work can be a display of support but it is not inherently a strike. Not every form of resistance has to be a strike, and a strike isn't all encompassing of every form of resistance.

Now, there have been examples of nonunionized workers striking in the US, but this has been in pursuit of a labor demand (often recognition like in Minneapolis in 1934.) The illegality of general strikes in the US since 1947 places us in a bit of a fallacy. If a general strike happens, it's illegal, so if it's not being treated as illegal, it must not be a general strike. Right?

I believe that a core component of striking is workers committing civil disobedience. This facilitates disruption of the status quo and, in the better planned general strikes, the facilitation of mutual aid to fill the needs created by the disruption of the status quo.

[16] Luis Feliz Leon. "Will ICE Ignite a Mass Strike in Minnesota?" Labor Notes, January 16, 2026.

The facilitation of mutual aid is something that is happening quite actively. In an ongoing way, communities are providing food and rent support for people who are being prevented from working or leaving their homes.

Was there a disruption of the status quo? Well certainly for those who participated, many businesses were closed, but to my knowledge few if any were forced to close as a labor demand.[16]

But is it disobedient? That's sort of a broader question, and we need to consider disobedient to whom? Is it disobedient to an employer who has voluntarily closed? Is it disobedient to an employer who has preemptively closed fearing there would be walk offs? Is it disobedient to an authoritarian federal occupation?

These questions air on the philosophical side and I certainly don't feel like I have definitive answers to print, but if you read the zine and come back and decide you really want to argue about this, that's your prerogative I suppose.

Even if I am a hater and don't believe this was technically a general strike, it certainly was something. I would like to offer some potential terms into the mix. Labor historian Jeremy Brecher coined the term "Social Strike." In his words:

> Social strike is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of activities that use the withdrawal of cooperation and mass disruption to affect governments and social structures. I use the term "social strikes" to describe mass actions that exercise power by withdrawing cooperation from and disrupting the operation of society. Social strikes represent the withdrawal of cooperation and acquiescence by a whole society, manifested for example in general strikes, political strikes and mass popular "people power" uprisings. The goal of a social strike is to affect not just the immediate employer, but a political regime or social structure. In all their varied forms they are based on Gandhi's fundamental perception that "even the most powerful cannot rule without the cooperation of the ruled."[17, 18]

[16] One potential exception here would be the Walker in our previous examples.

[17] Alexandria Shaner and Jeremy Brecher. Social Strikes: Confronting ICE and Resisting Authoritarianism. Z. January 16, 2026.

One of the terms used in the Gandhian civil disobedience that Brecher references is hartal.

Derived from the Gujarati term હડતાળ (haḍtāl), hartal takes a broader definition than exclusively the withholding of labor in a general strike and includes the voluntary closure of businesses and schools. The term was popularized in the context of political action by the noncooperation movement in a nationwide protest against the 1919 curtailment of civil liberties in India under the Rowlatt Act.

In Gene Sharp's 198 Methods of Nonviolent Action (1973), he classifies a hartal as a combination of a strike and economic closure. Continuing in Sharp's rather prescriptivist classification, the Global Nonviolent Action Database defines Hartal as:

> An Indian method of protest in which economic life of an area is suspended on voluntary basis to show extreme dissatisfaction with a policy, etc. Usually 1-2 days long, not expected to have economic impact.

This lacks some of the nuance that I found in other sources, but I think the key components are the short duration and suspension of the economic status quo in service of achieving a political end, not just a labor end. Although, in both the cases of hartals and general strikes there is an active strike, a withholding of labor that prevents an employer from doing business.

Indeed in the recent decades, there have been legal distinctions (in particular the 1997 case Communist Party of India(Marxist) v. Bharat Kumar Palichathat which have pushed hartals closer in definition to general strikes, as both are voluntary protest actions. This is in contrast to bandhs, which the Supreme Court of India ruled unconstitutional, defining them as hartals that are enforced coercively.[19]

[18] Brecher also authored a report published by the Z Network in December 2025, titled "Social Strikes: Can General Strikes, Mass Strikes, and People Power
[19] Uprisings Provide A Last Defense Against MAGA Tyranny?" with further examples. My other sources for this section have been
B.P. Rath and B.B. Das. "Right to Strike, and Analysis." Indian Journal of Industrial Relations. 41:2. October, 2005. (continued on following page)

A popular part of the rhetoric around 1/23 has been that it was the first general strike in the United States in eighty years, since the 1946 Oakland General Strike. Even if we are to argue that 1/23 is a general strike, there are other historic events that also arguably meet the same criteria.

The May 1, 2006 action **"A Day Without Immigrants"** was organized in protest of an extremely conservative immigration reform bill passed by the House that, among other things, criminalized undocumented residency.

Throughout the spring, smaller protests against the bill had been escalating nationally. Locally, 30,000 protestors marched in April in St. Paul. National organizers wanted to build on this momentum with a single day action. Organizers encouraged people to not shop, not go to work, and not attend school, to demonstrate the economic power of immigrants. In anticipation, President Bush urged protestors to not to boycott and to rally after work or on the weekend instead.[20]

On the day of the event, marches and rallies were held in cities across America, with the largest in Los Angeles and Chicago. Both cities also noticed an appreciable drop in attendance as students stayed home or attended the protests.[21] Truckers in the Port of Los Angeles refused to work and about two dozen meatpacking plants announced closures in advance and workers were given the day off, hedging their bets about how many people would attend.[22] The bill failed in the Senate later that month.

Ber Suykens and Aynul Islam. "Hartal as a complex political performance: General strikes and the organisation of (local) power in Bangladesh." Contributions to Indian Sociology. 47:1. 2013.
Omar Khan. "Hartal and Oborodh Still Lawful!" The Daily Star. 2015.
Sirajul Islam, Beyond Hartals : Towards Democracy in Bangladesh, March 2005.
United Nations Development Programme, The Politics of Hartal in Bangladesh (News Network, 2000).

[20] Maura Reynolds. "Bush Asks Immigrants to Reject Work Boycotts." Los Angeles Times. April 29, 2006.

[21] Randal C. Archibold. "Immigrants Take to U.S. Streets in Show of Strength." New York Times. May 2, 2006.

[22] Mark Steil and Sanden Totten. "Preparing a "Day without Immigrants." MPR News. April 30, 2006.

In a historical parallel to 1946, Occupy Oakland also held **"The Oakland General Strike."**

If you weren't here for it, in short, Occupy was a populist movement that emerged in 2011 in response to frustration with corporate greed, including the Great Recession, 2008 bank bailouts and 2010 Citizens United decision in the midst of widening economic disparities. Inspired by the tactics of the Arab Spring, decentralized protesters set up a series of encampments, most publicly Occupy Wall Street in September 2011. Some of the movement's slogans like "we are the 99%" coined by David Graeber have remained in the popular discourse, and it was a formative organizing experience for many.

One of the more radical groups was Occupy Oakland, and on the evening of November 2, 2011 they led a march beginning at 4pm, protestors walked from Frank Ogawa Plaza to the Port of Oakland, blocking all truck traffic on the port's main road. Estimates ranged from 7,000 to 100,000 protestors.[23]

The event also sought the support of local unions. SEIU Local 1021 encouraged members to participate through time off. The Oakland Education Association and Berkeley Federation of Teachers encouraged member to use time off, or to participate in the evening actions after the work day. A number of ILWU Local 10 longshoreman walked off the job in support, though no unions officially struck.[24]

The port was shut down for about 12 hours, until police forcibly dispersed the protestors, injuring at least two and arresting dozens. The shutdown cost the Port about $4 million.[25]

Both of these movements used similar tactics to 1/23 so it's worth considering. Are these general strikes? And why have they not been popularly remembered or considered in the lineage of this moment?

23 Danielle Morton. "Occupy Oakland's General Strike." Boston Review. November 4, 2011

24 Robin Gee. "Teachers, Service Workers Support Oakland's Strike Without Striking." Turnstyle News. November 2, 2011.

25 Chris Filippi. "Oakland City Council Avoids Vote On Port Closure In Raucous Meeting." KCBS. December 21, 2011.

Why does it matter if this isn't technically a general strike, or the first general strike since 1946? Aren't you just being pedantic?

I am being pedantic, but I'm not just being pedantic. What the event is called popularly is not the most important, and certainly isn't more important than the event actually happening. And, as I have said, it is too soon to look at anything other than the immediate effects, so judging the protest by its ability to accomplish its stated goals wouldn't be fully fair right now. Labor occupies something of a mythic position

But if we want a movement, a social movement, a labor movement, a leftist movement we need to be more aware of some things:

Our available options: a strike, originating from labor unions is not the only thing we can do, it is a particular tool that excels at a particular purpose, but is lacking in others. Just as a rally, a boycott, a blockade, a walk off, or a "pie-ing" all serve specific purposes on their own but are most effective organized in concert. One particular type of action isn't a panacea and doesn't need to be.

Our allies: We need to pay attention to motivates them and where their own biases and interests lay. The small business owner may be on your side against creeping fascism, but might have key differences when it comes to labor rights. The likewise the classical liberal nonprofit executive, the faith leader, the concerned homeowner and the staunch AFSCME union member who is also a correctional officer. You can and should collaborate with them in your shared mutual interest and build trust and community, and use their connections and resources. But you should also be clear eyed about how they are doing the same with you. If there is another general strike, by that name or not, some of them may not be on your side again.

Our history: As much as we love to talk about it, the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster's strike isn't going to be an all-encompassing model for how to do a protest. Neither for that matter are either of the prior two examples, nor the 2019 Ricky Renuncia protests in Puerto Rico, nor the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. But if we learn from them, what went well and where we fell short we can build a more effective movement going forward. This is why ongoing dialogue about what works and what we can learn is critical.

If you want more of this sort of analysis (or you hated it so much you want to see what else I'm wrong about) you can collect the rest of what seems to be becoming a series:

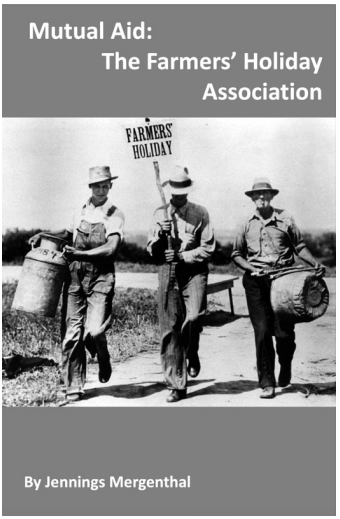
Following the end of World War I and the 1918 Flu Pandemic, Seattle's unions declared a general strike.

Relatively novel was the manner in which the strike leaders facilitated municipal services to provide for the needs of the striking workers. Here we explore these strategies, where they worked and what the shortcomings were.

Published November 2025.

At the beginning of the Great Depression, Midwestern famers faced a series of crises. The more militant among them organized into the Farm Holiday Association, which used of political, rhetorical and vigilante tactics to build mutual solidarity and advocate for relief. Here we explore where the FHA came from, what they did, and the causes of their eventual dissolution.

Published November 2025.



Coming soon (probably):

The Nonpartisan League and an exploration of third party agrarian populism in the early 20th century.

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